

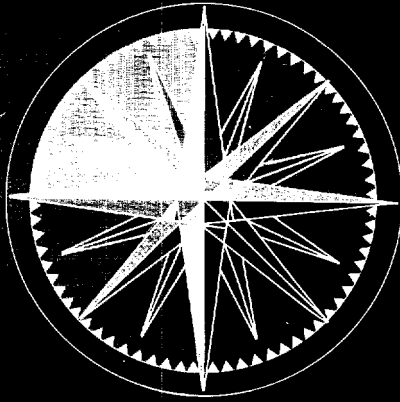
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# CURRENT INTELLIGENCE WEEKLY SPECIAL REPORT

THE COMMUNIST PARTY IN GAULLIST FRANCE

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**SECRET****THE COMMUNIST PARTY IN GAULLIST FRANCE**

The French Communist Party seems to have gone a long way toward ending its political isolation. This was evident last December when it united with the non-Communist left to give De Gaulle's presidential opponent, Francois Mitterrand, 46 percent of the vote. Whether it will cooperate with Mitterrand's Federation of the Democratic and Socialist Left in the legislative elections scheduled for next March remains to be seen. For one thing, the federation now seems lukewarm to a renewal of the alliance. Equally important, the Communists are undecided whether it is in their interest to try to reduce the Gaullist majority in the National Assembly. They can join happily with the non-Communist left in condemning De Gaulle's "reactionary" domestic policies, but many elements of De Gaulle's foreign policy are identical with planks in the Communists' own party platform.

**Assets and Liabilities**

Since 1964, when Waldeck Rochet replaced the late Maurice Thorez as secretary general, the French Communist Party (PCF) has been trying to win wider acceptance among the other parties as a French political force. The party has compelling assets as an ally in an election campaign. Its hard-core membership is estimated at 280,000, making it the largest organized political group in France. It has a formidable propaganda machine, a disciplined bloc in the National Assembly, and administrative experience in local government. Moreover, over one fifth of French voters regularly back the PCF.

Although the PCF has declined steadily in membership since World War II, it has main-

tained its strength among urban workers, both blue- and white-collar, particularly in Paris and the industrialized north. It also has a sizable following in the agricultural and economically depressed areas of central France and along the Mediterranean coast. Lately, it has won some middle-class support among those trained in the new technologies, who tend to think of membership in the party as an effective sign of intellectual protest.

The Communist-dominated General Labor Confederation (CGT), with 1.25 million members is the largest labor group in France. Because of its size and its traditional position in French labor, the CGT's influence goes beyond its membership, and other national confederations tailor their policies to its positions. Lately,

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WALDECK ROCHET

the CGT has gained a greater measure of respectability because the government permits it, along with other trade unions, to represent France at international labor conferences.

The PCF also has liabilities. It has the reputation of being stodgy and orthodox. It is no longer attractive to younger people and intellectuals. Even party members cannot foresee a time when the PCF will be in power, and its role seems destined to remain one of protest. Most of the party's liabilities stem from its subservience to Moscow which, historically, has been complete. In recent years, the PCF has moved more slowly than other European Communist parties to identify itself with national interests and to loosen the reins on party intellectuals.

PCF leaders realize they have an image problem. Last year, they let L'Humanite, the official party newspaper, publish

a stinging denunciation by party intellectual Louis Aragon of the trial of Soviet writers Sinyavsky and Daniel--accused of slandering the USSR. A month later, L'Humanite published a party resolution inviting Communist intellectuals to express themselves with "audacity and independence." Early this year, however, the party publicly rejected a request for readmission by 20 former members who had quit the party in 1962 in protest over the methods and policies of the leadership. The rejection was justified on the grounds that the motives of the 20 for rejoining had not been sincere.

Election Outlook

The party once again faces a dilemma in formulating its strategy for the forthcoming parliamentary elections. It desires above all to preserve its own strength and influence. To do this, an alliance with the non-Communist left would be advantageous. On the other hand, since much of De Gaulle's foreign policy satisfies Moscow's objectives, the best strategy from an over-all Communist point of view might be for the PCF to maintain its own candidates, thereby undercutting the opposition and facilitating a Gaullist victory.

These alternatives reflect a division over strategy within the party. Veteran party leaders, including Rochet, attach more importance to foreign policy than to domestic issues and consequently are little disposed to wage an all-out fight in conjunction with the non-Communist left

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against the Gaullists. Younger party elements are more concerned with the economic and social problems of the working classes and regard the Gaullists as their principal adversaries. The state visits of Soviet leaders to France next month and early next year may bring the division within the party to a head, and the result may be to eliminate any chance of renewing the alliance of last December between the party and Mitterrand's federation.

Earlier enthusiasm over the sizable vote the combined forces of the left got in the presidential election made it seem that the PCF would participate again as a matter of course. It would bring Communist influence more directly to bear on the French political scene and strengthen leftist opposition to De Gaulle. The alliance, however, has disintegrated over both tactical and substantive disagreements. The federation and the Communists are split not only over their traditional policy differences, but also over the key question of whether or not to make an all-out effort to eliminate the present Gaullist majority. While the federation's main objective is to defeat the Gaullists by any means necessary, the Communists have made it clear that they will not help to elect a center candidate over a Gaullist.

Guidelines released by the Mitterrand federation on 18 October reject the PCF demand for a reciprocity agreement in the second, run-off ballot. Rochet interpreted the guidelines as the

"federation's confirmation that it intends to conclude alliances with the right." He said that the PCF had therefore decided to launch a campaign on behalf of Communist candidates in order that "millions of democrats and workers" would be able to choose a "true democratic change." More recently Communist deputy and politburo member Francois Billoux announced at a PCF gathering in Corsica that if the federation does not "sign an agreement on a common program and on reciprocal withdrawals in favor of the best-placed candidate of the left, then it must be expected that the Communist candidate will be maintained on the second ballot." Although the Corsican section of the PCF has denied the statement was made, neither Billoux nor L'Humanite has done so.

#### Substantive Differences

The PCF and the federation disagree over many issues. There is a basic divergence on conditions for the elimination of the "evils of capitalism" and the resolution of the "class struggle." The PCF charges that the federation is not forthright enough on the rights of workers and the end of capitalism.

The Communists take the Soviet line on recognition of East Germany, while the federation position on the German question is moderate. They also disagree on the wisdom of France's withdrawal from its NATO military commitments. The Communists approve the move since it weakens Western unity. There are, however, elements within the federation, notably

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the radicals and Guy Mollet's Socialists, who favor French-NATO ties with modifications. The federation itself, which appears to sanction De Gaulle's move without saying so, has urged that France's withdrawal from NATO be considered definitive--thereby indicating its belief that re-entry into NATO is unlikely. PCF opposition to the Common Market is not as vociferous as it used to be, but the party is firm in rejecting the concept of European integration, a concept the federation vigorously supports.

The war in Vietnam provides the PCF with a ready-made campaign issue. Although the Communists and the Mitterrand federation agree that the US ought to stop bombing North Vietnam, the two have recently moved apart over PCF demands that the Socialists denounce "the American policy of aggression toward Vietnam" and charge that the US alone is at fault. The federation has refused to condemn only one side.

### Ambivalence Toward Regime

The PCF is less than enthusiastic about the ouster of a Gaullist majority from the National Assembly, and its position on De Gaulle is ambivalent. Domestically, De Gaulle is anathema to the PCF--a symbol of "reactionary, antiproletarianism." The party's overriding public objective is to end the personal power wielded by De Gaulle. In foreign affairs, however, De Gaulle's policies--toward NATO, Peking, the US, Vietnam--accord with Communist views.

Most embarrassing for the party, in terms of its political

image in France, is the way De Gaulle has outflanked it by his policy of detente with the East, his recent trip to the USSR, trade and cultural agreements with the Eastern European countries and visits of Eastern European leaders to Paris. In the last year, high Gaullist officials have visited all the Eastern European countries except East Germany. Soviet leaders are expected to visit Paris sometime before the elections.

Even where the PCF's fortunes were directly involved, the USSR has hardly been helpful. Last December, Moscow did not bother to conceal the fact that it favored the victory of De Gaulle over Mitterrand, the PCF's ally. This left the PCF with little to do but criticize De Gaulle as a "Charlie-come-lately" who had finally recognized the validity of Soviet and PCF policy.

### Prospects

A decision by the French Communist Party to concentrate solely on electing its own candidates will almost certainly precipitate a definitive break with Mitterrand's federation. It is likely that the PCF will in the end adopt a pragmatic approach very much like that it used before the alliance of last year. It will probably overlook the federation's acceptance of center candidates and make reciprocal agreements with Mitterrand in some districts. On the other hand, the PCF will probably not try very hard against the Gaullists.

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The PCF has made progress in gaining acceptance as a respectable political party partly because its leaders have created the impression for the public that they are becoming more independent of Moscow. A public opinion poll early this year showed that 48 percent of the electorate thought that Communists might be included in a government within the next ten years; 24 percent thought this unlikely; 28 percent had no opinion. The same poll showed 38 percent favorable to the inclusion of Communist ministers, except in foreign affairs and the interior.

The party's leaders are not likely to pay much attention to

these figures. Some of the party's younger elements, however, may take note of the spread between the party's 22 percent of the vote in national elections and the 38 percent who said they favored Communist participation in the government. These elements are said to be irked at the party's continued adherence to Moscow's foreign policy objectives and its slighting of French working-class needs. The party's hope, over the long run, of attaining a position of power can rest, however, only on convincing prospective political partners that it is ready to subordinate both its international orientation and any remaining remnant of its revolutionary zeal to a democratic commitment.

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